



PEOPLE'S ORGANIZATION FOR PROGRESS

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For Immediate Press Release

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King March To Protest Griffith Murder

The People's Organization for Progress (POP) will dedicate this year's march commemorating the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to Michael Griffith and other persons who have been the victims of racially motivated violence.

The march will be held on Monday, January 19, 1987. It will begin at noon at Military Park, in downtown Newark (if weather permits), and will proceed to the Paul Robeson Campus Center of Rutgers University, 350 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

"We believe that Dr. King would have wanted us to use his birthday as an opportunity to protest the brutal murder of Michael Griffith and others who have been the victims of racist violence," POP chairman Lawrence Hamm said.

"Michael's tragic death is graphic evidence that racism is as virulent today as it was during King's time," he said. "We urge everyone outraged by this incident to march with us."

A program will be held after the march at the Robeson Center beginning at 1:00 p.m. Speakers, musical, and cultural presentations will be featured.

This is the third annual commemoration of Dr. King sponsored by POP. The theme of this year's event is "Martin Luther King Jr.: His Truth Is Marching On."

Hamm went on to say that one of the reasons that incidents such as these are occurring is because a climate of racism exists. "The rightward drift of public opinion spurred in part by the racist domestic and foreign policies, statements, and actions of the Reagan administration have helped create an environment in which racism can thrive," he stated.

He also said that incidents such as the Griffith case are heppening frequently all across the country, but the public is unaware of this because the media has chosen not to sensationalize many of them.

Hamm condemned the recent decision of Criminal Court Judge Ernest Bianchi, who dismissed manslaughter and assault charges against three white youths who participated in the attack that lead to Griffith's death, charging them only with reckless endangerment. "This decision reaffirmed the belief of many that black lives are valued less than those of whites by the criminal justice system in this country." he noted.

He also criticized statements by the New York Court Officers Association calling for the disbarment and arrest of C. Vernon Mason and Alton Maddox Jr. lawyers representing Cedric Sandiford and Timothy Grimes, two survivors of the racist mob attack. "Theirs is clearly an attempt to make the victims and those who would assist them look like criminals and the criminals look like victims."

The Arts High School chorus and students from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary school will be among those performing at the program.

Persons planning to attend the program are asked to bring donations of canned goods and clothing for the hungry and needy.

Finally, Hamm urged people to read the writings and speeches of Dr. King. "It is important that we study King's ideas so that we may deepen our understanding of his philosophy and goals in order to more effectively continue the work he left behind." he said.